



Childhood Connections

August 3, 2023

Spotlight on Professionals

Spotlight on Professionals aims to share stories from those working in childhood programs. This includes all professionals such as home visiting, early intervention, child care, Head Start, preschool, and afterschool. These stories are also available on the [Early Connections website](#).



Photo Credit: Brandy Jone

This month's "Spotlight on Professionals" focuses on Brandy Jones, director of the Child Development Laboratory at St. Louis Community College.

Brandy's daughter attended a family child care program. When Brandy's daughter struggled with extreme separation anxiety, the program director offered Brandy a job to ensure Brandy's child felt safe. Brandy was taking community college classes, but was unsure of her direction until she began working with children.

Brandy's professional life took her in many different directions. She served as an early childhood assistant in a school district, a classroom teacher in a child care center, and worked as an infant/toddler educational assistant in a lab school. In 2010, she earned her Associate of Applied Science degree in early care and education. In 2017, she completed her bachelor's degree in child development.

After completing her bachelor's degree, Brandy wanted a new challenge and returned to work in a school district as a teen parent educator. Although she loved her work, she accepted a new job as assistant director at St. Louis Community College's Child Development Lab school in 2018.

Brandy went on to earn a master's degree in child development with an emphasis in leadership and advocacy from the Erickson Institute in 2022. In January of 2023, she became director of the St. Louis Community College's Child Development Lab.

When asked why others should consider the early childhood profession, Brandy referred to the children and said, "These are the people who will take care of us,

take care of our world. Take the chance now to impact what we'll have. Make a lasting impression. You can, and you will."

NEW! Statewide Phone Line is Live

We are excited to announce the launch of a new statewide phone number for early care and education resources and referrals: **866-583-2392**.

This number was the statewide phone number for First Steps early intervention and is being repurposed to add more options for resources and referrals.

First Steps calls will continue to route to their regional offices or System Point Of Entry. The child care search and resources calls coming in to this number will route to the United 4 Children call center. Families will also be able to make video calls, text, and live chat with this call center.

Now families and professionals can call one phone number to get help finding resources, child care, First Steps, and other early childhood programs and services.

UPDATE! Child Care Relief Funds

We are pleased to announce there are two new relief grants available to providers who are contracted with the DESE child care subsidy program or licensed with all health and safety training.

- Paycheck Protection grants support provider operations. [Apply here!](#) Application closes August 31, 2023.
- Retention for Child Care Staff grants support child care staff members. [Apply here!](#) Application closes August 31, 2023.

Check out all of the child care relief funds applications on the [Child Care Relief Funds website](#).

UPDATE! Subsidy Provider Rates & Sliding Fees

The increase in Missouri's child care subsidy rates will be in effect for services in July 2023 and corresponding payments made in August 2023. The new rate will increase child care subsidy rates to the 58th percentile.

In addition to an increase in subsidy rates, the sliding fee amount for families in the Transitional Levels of



REMINDER! Proposed Updates to Child Care Licensing Rules

The Office of Childhood (OOC) filed proposed rule amendments with the Secretary of State's office and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules.

The proposed changes were published in the July 17, 2023, edition of the Missouri Register. Drafts of the rule changes, as filed, are posted on the [Rules & Laws webpage](#). A chart is provided on the webpage that gives an overview of the proposed changes.

There is a link to a survey where you can submit comments on the proposed rules. The survey is open through August 17, 2023.

ANNOUNCEMENT! Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday.

The 2023 Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday begins at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, August 4, and runs through Sunday, August 6.

Visit the [Back to School Sales Tax Holiday](#) website for more information.

Child Care Subsidy will change for initial eligibility determinations and re-certifications, beginning in July 2023.

You can learn more about the sliding fees and families' responsibility to pay in this updated [Child Care Subsidy Brochure](#).

Although the sliding fee scale is changing, **this will not be an immediate change for families**; they will continue to pay according to their current eligibility and income amounts, until the family's next re-certification for eligibility. At that time, the family's eligibility letter will show the new sliding fee amount. Until then, the current payments and sliding fees will continue.

[Visit the child care subsidy webpage](#) for more information, including contact information if you have questions about your rate and parent responsibility.

NEW! Workforce Development Documents

The OOC's workforce initiative is working to recruit, retain, and support Missouri's early care and education workforce. You can read about the workforce development activities planned through 2030, review the new selected occupations chart, and read a data report completed in 2022 that examines Missouri's current early care and education workforce on the [PDG webpage](#).

NEW! Missouri Quality Pre-K Grants

Missouri Quality Pre-K Grants (MOQPK) are available to local education agencies (LEAs) and child care programs. The MOQPK Grant program is designed to expand the number of 4-year-olds in Missouri receiving quality Pre-K instruction regardless of the setting.

- The due date for LEAs to apply is August 11, 2023.
- The due date for child care programs to apply is August 31, 2023.

For more information about both grants, please visit the DESE [MOQPK](#) page.

NEW! Wonderschool Resource

Free Training & Support for Child Care Providers.

ANNOUNCEMENT! Missouri State Fair

During the Missouri State Fair, August 10–20, 2023, OOC Parent Education staff will be participating in an opportunity to promote developmental screenings and home visiting services for eligible families.

We will be located in the Family Fun Center on August 15, 17, and 20. Our staff will be connecting families with their local Parents as Teachers Parent Education Program for free developmental screenings.

Learn more about how parent education programs help families and children on the [home visiting webpage](#).

NEW! Child Care Apprenticeships Available

Child care apprenticeships are available in the St. Louis area for child care staff to obtain their child development associate (CDA) degree.

Check out [this informational flyer](#) or call 314-427-4940 to learn more about this opportunity.

NEW! Resource for Early Learning Success

Using Child Care ARPA Discretionary funding, OOC has contracted with Wonderschool, an all-in-one child care management system used in several states, that helps child care programs launch or grow their business. Using the Wonderschool platform, child care programs can:

- Participate in a 12-week program to help open your own business, obtain your child care license, or learn marketing/budgeting tips
- Enhance connections with their families, manage your enrollment process, and streamline your business practices
- Receive coaching and webinars on topics such as setting and collecting tuition, tracking expenses, parent communication, and streamlined record keeping

Visit the [Wonderschool landing page](#) and learn more about the resources tailored to new and existing child care providers in Missouri. To learn more about the Wonderschool platform, join one of the discovery sessions. Sessions are offered in both English and Spanish.

REMINDER! First Steps Transition

Did you know OOC has a webpage with information and training on transition for First Steps and ECSE staff? Many children in the Missouri First Steps program transition to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services through their local school districts.

To view the recorded transition training, frequently asked questions, and other important transition resources, visit this [First Steps webpage](#).

REMINDER! Free Professional Development Opportunity

New training dates have been added for trainings that support professionals working with young children and their families. Check out the [Ages & Stages Questionnaire](#) training flyer for more details and registration information. This online training session includes three clock hours and an ASQ screening kit for eligible early care educators.

REMINDER! Required Staff/Child Ratios

The U.S. Department of Education and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln created an [Early Learning Network](#) briefs to support early learning success as children transition from pre-kindergarten to elementary school.

Check out [their new policy briefs](#) that are divided into four areas: pre-k participation, classroom experiences and learning opportunities, relationships, and sustained high-quality experiences.

RESOURCE! Get your new 2023-2024 Growing Strong Calendar

This is a [fantastic free resource](#) from Brookes Publishing for early childhood teachers, parents, and anyone who cares for or works with young children.

Covering a full 16 months, [this printable calendar](#) is filled with colorful photos, memorable quotes from expert authors, and practical tips and activities that promote healthy development. Print this calendar for your home or office and use it all year to help you bond with your young children and support the skills they'll need to succeed in school and in life.

This is a reminder for child care providers who are licensed, license-exempt, contracted for child care subsidy, or in the process of becoming licensed, license-exempt, or contracted for child care subsidy.

Make sure you maintain required staff/child ratios. Group Home/Center rule 5 CSR 25-500.112 states:

(1) The following staff/child ratios shall be maintained on the premises at all times:

- a. *Birth Through 2 Years* shall have no less than one adult to four children, with no more than eight children in a group;
- b. *Age 2 Years* shall have no less than one adult to eight children, with no more than 16 children in a group;
- c. *Ages 3-4 Years* shall have no less than one adult to 10 children;
- d. *Ages 5 and Up* shall have no less than one adult to every 16 children; and
- e. *Mixed Age Groups 2 Years and Up* shall have no less than one adult to 10 children with a maximum of four 2-year olds. When there are more than four 2-year olds in a mixed group, the staff/child ratio shall be no less than one adult to eight children.

Read more in the [Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Homes and Centers](#).

Child Care Subsidy Contract for Services Terms and Conditions 5.3 states:

- a. *Birth through two years* shall have no less than one adult to four children, with no more than eight children in a group;
- b. *Age two years* shall have no less than one adult to eight children, with no more than 16 children in a group;
- c. *Ages three through four years* shall have no less than one adult to ten children with no more than 20 children in a group; and
- d. *Ages five and up* shall have no less than one adult to every 16 children with no more than 48 children in a group.”

NEW! Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Chart

This [new chart](#) shows the funding planned for Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) to support direct services to children and families in programs administered by OOC. It also includes federally-funded Early Head Start/Head Start programs.

REMINDER! Missouri HealthNet Coverage

During the official COVID pandemic, the need to renew MO HealthNet (Missouri Medicaid) healthcare coverage was temporarily suspended.

Beginning April 1, 2023, the Department of Social Services, Family Support Division was required to restart annual renewals for thousands of Missouri families.

Help us ensure Missouri families do not lose coverage by sharing the [MO HealthNet annual renewal website](#) or one of the handouts in this Medicaid [renewal toolkit](#) with families who rely on this healthcare coverage.

REMINDER! Trauma - Informed Schools Resource

The Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) is an educational program that uses videoconferencing

Read more in the [Terms and Services for the Child Care Subsidy Contract](#).

NEW! Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) is Seeking Members

ECSAC is seeking individuals who are affiliated with one of the following organizations and interested in serving on the council:

- Local education agency (public school)
- Early intervention provider
- Early care and education provider
- Parent of a child with a developmental delay or disability

Check out this [informational flyer](#) if you are interested in learning more about the council.

REVISED! ARPA Discretionary Spend Plan

As part of the Fiscal Year 2024 budget process, the spend plan for Child Care American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Discretionary funds was revised in order to reallocate funds from several activities in order to have funds to support the child care subsidy rate increase.

The revised spend plan is posted at the bottom of the Child Care Relief Funds [website](#).

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships in order to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.



Turn the Page STL is a Saint Louis based nonprofit that is partnering with summer camps like the YMCA for their first cohort of Summer Literacy Infusion. Turn the Page STL's goal is to combat the summer literacy slide. Staff and families have received resources to implement fun and exciting literacy activities this summer.

Photo Credit: David Carson, Post-Dispatch

technology to create communities of learning focused on specialists sharing their expertise with community providers who can give their patients improved care in their own communities.

The University of Missouri's Trauma-Informed Schools ECHO online collaborative learning sessions will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. every 2nd Tuesday of the month, beginning in September 2023. [Check out this flyer](#) for more details and to register.

Camp counselors are trained in-person by Turn the Page STL to help children learn to have fun reading. They also have access to five videos on best practices for reading aloud, independent reading, writing, and playing literacy games.

Turn the Page STL partners with community organizations to be able to provide each camp counselor a literacy kit. Each literacy kit includes more than a hundred high-interest, culturally representative books, literacy games, notebooks, pencils, chalk, and a binder of local literacy resources.

“Our summer literacy infusion cohort is unique,” said Allie Cicotte, Senior Programs Manager, Clark-Fox Family Foundation. “We are taking traditional camp programs who aren’t only academic programs and encouraging **all** camp counselors to support student literacy. By making it simple and fun to infuse with four blocks daily, we hope that summer camps maintain the fun joy of a traditional summer camp while also intentionally supporting students’ literacy growth. Providing these resource kits per counselor, we are ensuring that those implementing the daily blocks have the tools necessary to help our students thrive.”

UPDATE! Preschool Development Grant



The Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) provides funding over three years to coordinate a more effective, high-quality early childhood system that better prepares Missouri children for success.

Each month the Office of Childhood hosts a live webinar to provide updates and information about the PDG B-5 to stakeholders. A [recording](#) and the [PowerPoint slides](#) from the July webinar is available in case you were unable to attend and wish to hear the information. You can view archived webinars [here](#):

- [June 2023](#)
- [May 2023](#)
- [April 2023](#)
- [March 2023](#)
- [February 2023](#)
- [January 2023](#)

A [PDG B-5 dashboard](#) is also updated monthly. This dashboard provides an at-a-glance look at priority areas, budget status, and key accomplishments.

PDG B-5 Monthly Webinar

Join us for the next PDG B-5 Stakeholder webinar on Tuesday, August 29, 2023, from noon to 12:45 p.m. to learn more and ask questions. You can [access the webinar](#) in a Google Chrome or Safari web browser. Do not view in Internet Explorer. We hope you can participate!

For questions about the stakeholder webinar series, or suggestions for topics in future webinars, email us at Childhood@dese.mo.gov.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

Visit the Office of Childhood website to find [previous editions](#) of the Childhood Connections.

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